

**Chapter 102**

**INFORMED CHOICE**

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## **Section I. Definitions**

**“Informed choice”** means making a decision based on adequate information. As appropriate, such information may include methods, costs, durations, accessibility, customer satisfaction, probabilities, sources, and consequences.

## **Section II. General Policy**

- A. The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) will provide each applicant, including persons who are receiving services during an extended evaluation, and each eligible person, the opportunity to make informed choices throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. DVR, in consultation with its State Rehabilitation Council, shall design policies and procedures and guidance material that enable each person to make an informed choice with regard to the selection of a long-term vocational goal, vocational rehabilitation services, and service providers.
- B. Policies, procedures, and guidance materials will be delivered through appropriate modes of communication. They will include, as applicable, information concerning the availability and scope of informed choice, the manner in which informed choice may be exercised, and the availability of support services for persons with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice.
- C. In developing a person's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), DVR shall provide or assist the person in acquiring information necessary to make an informed choice about specific services that are needed to achieve the person's vocational goal. This information shall include cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services, customer satisfaction with those services

to the extent that information relating to customer satisfaction is available, the qualifications of potential service providers, the types of services offered by those providers, and the degree to which services are provided in integrated settings. The IPE shall include documentation regarding the choices made. (See Chapter 203, Individualized Plan for Employment).

- D. In providing or assisting the person in acquiring the information above, DVR may use, but shall not be limited to, the following methods or sources of information:
1. Lists of services and service providers;
  2. Periodic customer satisfaction surveys and reports, to the extent they are available;
  3. Referrals to other customers, customer groups, or disability advisory councils qualified to discuss services or service providers;
  4. Relevant accreditation, certification, or other information relating to the qualifications of service providers;
  5. Cost, accessibility, and duration of services; and
  6. Degree to which services are provided in integrated settings.

***GUIDANCE:*** In some cases it may only be possible to check for understanding by asking consumers to rephrase in their own words their understanding of the options. One way to do this, without being patronizing, is to ask for “help” in phrasing the case note: “How do I write this down?” Or say “I need to write a note that reflects your understanding of how you came to decide on this option.” The counselor then writes “In John’s words ‘I decided to go to this computer training program because.....’”.

### **Section III: Disagreements**

If the Counselor cannot support a decision of the person, the Counselor shall:

- A. Assist the person in reviewing and re-evaluating information needed to make an informed decision;
- B. Discuss with the person the need for further information and how to gather it;
- C. Provide additional supports or alternative modes of communication to ensure understanding by the person;
- D. Bring in additional people (peers, professionals, consultants, and other relevant personnel) to discuss the issues; and
- E. Discuss alternatives and possible compromises with the person.

***GUIDANCE:*** To make an informed choice, one must have and be able to understand pertinent information; acquiring and understanding information takes time. In an attempt to deliver services quickly and expediently (e.g., in the Division's "fast track" model), the counselor may fail to provide all pertinent information and enough time to interpret/understand it. Consequently, reviewing and re-evaluating information and following the activities listed above are important. Counselor judgment becomes key in determining the extent to which a person has researched and understands factors in making an informed decision.

Examples of disagreements:

1. The person is interested in attending a class at Community College of Vermont to assess if they would want to pursue a post secondary degree to improve their employability. The counselor strongly supports the idea of trying out a single class as a low-risk assessment. The counselor agrees to provide \$300 toward the cost of the class and textbook. In the course of the

discussion the counselor points out to the consumer that they will probably need access to a laptop or computer and a printer to complete the course work. The consumer interprets this part of the discussion as a commitment on the part of the counselor to pay for a laptop and printer.

At the next meeting, the consumer comes to the meeting with the prices of a laptop and a printer. The counselor apologizes for misunderstanding and explains they will not purchase a laptop and printer for a single class. The counselor encourages the consumer to research the computer lab at the community college to see if that resource is sufficient. The counselor also encourages the consumer to look into low-cost second-hand computers. The counselor also agrees the consumer can use some of the \$300 provided toward the computer if they can make it work with their own resources to pay for the class and purchase the books. After looking into it the consumer decides to use the \$300 for tuition and books and uses the free computer lab services.

2. The person needs transportation to get to and from work and asks that the Division help purchase an automobile; he has already looked at the Transportation policy and also knows a person for whom the Division purchased a vehicle, so he wants one, too.

The Counselor reviews the Transportation policy with the person and clarifies that the “most cost-effective alternative, including relocation” will normally be provided. The Counselor also asks that the person investigate costs of operating a vehicle and offers to help the person relocate closer to his job or to a location which is on a compatible bus line.

The person refuses to consider anything other than a vehicle purchase. The Counselor provides information on Client Assistance Program (CAP) and reviews DVR’s appeals process.

- F. If the Counselor and the person are still in disagreement, the Counselor will provide information concerning CAP and will review DVR’s appeals process.